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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 000229

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BRASILIA FOR S.HENSHAW; MADRID FOR H.LLORENS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: PARTY BUSINESS TAKES A BACKSEAT AT HONDURAS,  
NATIONAL PARTY CONVENTION

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 223

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JAMES WILLIARD, REASONS 1.4 (B & D)

¶1. (C) Summary. On Saturday March 8, 2008, the Honduran National Party held a party convention in the capital city of Tegucigalpa. Though party business was alleged to be on the agenda, the event more closely resembled a political rally for party boss Pepe Lobo, while his competitors for the party's nomination were left waiting in the wings and found their only venue for expressing their dissatisfaction to be the national press. The resulting complaints could not be substantiated by PolOffs who attended the event. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In front of a giant backdrop reading "Opening-up to Positive Change," National Party leaders opened their convention this weekend with calls for party unification and general railing against the Zelaya administration. After a few minutes of business, the focus turned to speeches by the major candidates for the party's nomination, and in particular the speech of Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo Sosa, president of the Central Committee of the National Party.

¶3. (U) Though Lobo's speech was to focus on business, he made a rock-star entry into the packed auditorium, accompanied by Tegucigalpa Mayor Ricardo Alvarez and a marching band. After a few laps of shaking hands and kissing babies, Lobo and Alvarez reached the stage and delivered speeches that were long on rhetoric, but short on substance, and noticeably lacking even the slightest focus on party business.

¶4. (U) Lobo strongly criticized the Zelaya government for not addressing the issue of the 600,000 youth without identity cards and promised to fight for their rights. He also critiqued the high cost of living, and called the current government "the most corrupt in the entire history of Honduras." Thirty minutes later, Lobo and Alvarez were finished, left the stage, and exited the building. They were followed to the podium by others seeking the nomination, but none had nearly the following of Lobo.

¶5. (U) Press reports are detailing a litany of complaints raised by candidate Mario Canahuati about Lobo and the convention. (See reftel.) After calling Lobo a liar and a dictator during his speech, Canahuati is now offering a laughable laundry list of reasons for the failure of his supporters to materialize at the convention. The list includes an 80-bus boycott, city-wide planned power-outages, restricted access and the removal of speakers.

¶6. (C) Comment: Though it is impossible to know everything that was going on behind the scenes, PolOffs attending the convention noticed no visible restraints on anyone,s supporters attending. There was not a heavy security presence, power outage, or bus blockade. Instead, the writing was on the wall--literally--for Canahuati inside the arena. Of the many hundreds of signs, PolOffs spotted only a few for Canahuati. By the time Canahuati began his speech, only about twenty percent of the conventioners remained, and all but about fifty of those remaining were wearing Lobo shirts. End comment.  
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